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DOS Review Completed.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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WTE DE AFBAF

ZZ 04/0759Z OCT 72
FM AL HAIG
TO HENRY A. KISSINGER

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HAIG TO 012

WE HAVE JUST COMPLETED 3 HOUR,, 50 MINUTE SESSION WITH PRESIDENT THIEU AND HIS NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, INCLUDING VICE PRESIDENT HUONG, PRIME MINISTER KHIEM, FOREIGN MINISTER LAM, FOREIGN POLICY ASSISTANT DUC, AND SPECIAL ASSISTANT NHA. IT WAS VERY APPARENT TO BUNKER AND MYSELF AS WE APPROACHED THE PALACE THAT A MAJOR CONFRONTATION WAS IN THE OFFING. TRAFFIC HAD APPARENTLY BEEN STOPPED FOR SOME TIME AND AS WE ENTERED THE PALACE THERE WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF AN ATMOSPHERE OF CRISIS. WHEN BUNKER AND I WERE CALLED TO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, WE WERE INSTEAD USHERED STRAIGHT TO THE CONFERENCE ROOM WHERE THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WAS IN WAITING THIEU INTRODUCED THE MEETING IN VIETNAMESE WITH NHA STANDING AT A CHALK BOARD AND SERVING AS TRANSLATOR. THIEU STATED THAT HE WISHED TO MAKE A PRESENTATION TO ME AND AMBASSADOR BUNKER WHICH WOULD COVER FOUR ITEMS: (1) THE GVN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE SEPTEMBER 26 PROPOSAL. (2) THE GVN ASSESSMENT OF THIS PROPOSAL. (3) THE TWO U.S. COUNTER PROPOSALS AND THEIR VARIANTS. (4) THE GVN ASSESSMENTS OF THESE PROPOSALS.

IT WAS EVIDENT FROM THE OUTSET THAT WE WERE BEING CONFRONTED BY SOLID, UNIFIED GVN OPPOSITION TO U.S. COUNTER PROPOSALS. HOWEVER, DURING THE PERIOD THAT FOLLOWED IT

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WAS EVIDENT THAT THEIR REAL HANGUP WAS COMPLETELY FOCUSED ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE CNP AND THE FACT THAT THE UNITED STATES MOVED IN THE FACE OF THEIR OPPOSITION TO ARTICULATE ITS COMPOSITION AT THE SEPTEMBER 15 PARIS SESSION. ALL OF THIS BECAME VERY CLEAR AS NHA WENT THROUGH A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS VISUALIZED UNDER THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND THE U.S. COUNTER PROPOSALS. THE MAIN CRUX OF THIEU'S ARGUMENTS WERE THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CONCORD (U.S. - CNR) FUNCTIONED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF UNANIMITY, IT WAS NEVERTHELESS FOUNDED ON AN ARBITRARY THREE PARTY CRITERION WHICH IN NO WAY CONFORMED TO THE EXISTING POLITICAL REALITIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

PRESIDENT THIEU POINTED OUT THAT UNDER THIS CONCEPT A STALEMATE WOULD RESULT AND CULMINATE IN HIS REMOVAL AND IN THE ULTIMATE COLLAPSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM BECAUSE IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, HE AND THE GVN MUST BECOME THE OBSTACLE TO THE REALIZATION OF THE ARRANGEMENTS THAT HAD BEEN AGREED TO. THIEU ALSO COMPLAINED THAT DESPITE YOUR ASSURANCES TO HIM DURING YOUR VISIT IN AUGUST THAT YOU WOULD ASK NO MORE CONCESSIONS, YOU PROCEEDED TO GO BEYOND THESE ASSURANCES. THEY WERE APPARENTLY UPSET AT THE REJECTION OF THEIR 26 AUGUST MEMORANDUM, BUT EVEN MORE DISTURBED BY OUR UNILATERAL ACTION ON SEPTEMBER 15. THIEU STATED THAT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AMOUNTED TO THE IMPOSITION OF A NEW FORM OF PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM FOR VIETNAM.

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FINALLY, HE COMPLAINED BITTERLY THAT DESPITE YOUR ASSURANCES WITH RESPECT TO THE SECRECY OF THE PARIS TALKS, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD PUBLICLY REVEALED THE BASIC CHARACTER OF THE GOVERNMENT UNDER DISCUSSION. THIEU COMPLAINED THAT THE FRENCH AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE COLLUDING TO PRESSURE THE UNITED STATES TO ACCEPT THE THREE PART GOVERNMENT. HE HIGHLIGHTED SPECIFICALLY THE REFERENCE IN POMPIDOU'S PRESS CONFERENCE TO THE FACT THAT THE U.S. AND HANOI WERE NO LONGER DISCUSSING PRINCIPLES BUT THE APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES, ADDING THAT THERE ARE THREE INTEREST GROUPS IN SOUTH VIETNAM THAT MUST BE ACCOMMODATED.

THIEU WAS JOINED BY EACH MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WHO ATTACKED EVERY ASPECT OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE PROPOSAL OR U.S. COUNTER PROPOSAL. HOWEVER, THE MOST SERIOUS OPPOSITION INVOLVED THE TRIPARTITE CHARACTER OF THE COMMITTEE.

I PAINSTAKINGLY COVERED EACH AND EVERY ASPECT OF THE RATIONALE WE DISCUSSED IN WASHINGTON AND CLEARLY LEFT THE FIRM INDICATION THAT A FUNDAMENTAL REAPPRAISAL WOULD RESULT FROM SAIGON'S FAILURE NOT ONLY TO PROVIDE US WITH A SPECIFIC COUNTER PROPOSAL BUT ALSO IN EFFECT TO REFUSE TO EVEN GIVE US SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE REMAINING 12 POINTS. I EMPHASIZED THAT PRESIDENT NIXON WOULD VIEW THIS AS A MATTER OF THE UTMOST GRAVITY WHICH COULD NOT BUT JEOPARDIZE THE WHOLE CHARACTER OF OUR FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS. AFTER A LENGTHY COUNTER-ATTACK BY ME, THE SESSION BECAME HIGHLY CHARGED AND EMOTIONAL WITH THIEU IN TEARS THROUGH MUCH OF ITS DURATION. I USED JUST ABOUT EVERY ARGUMENT CONCEIVABLE

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IN AN EFFORT TO MOVE THIEU AND HIS ASSOCIATES. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS THIEU STATED THAT HE COULD NOT SERVE AS PRESIDENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND ACCIESE IN ACCEPTING U.S. PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD ONLY RESULT IN THE COLLAPSE OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE REALIZATION OF HANOI'S OBJECTIVES.

IN THE WANING MOMENTS OF ALMOST A FOUR HOUR SESSION, I ASKED THIEU WHAT PRECISELY HE WANTED ME TO TELL PRESIDENT NIXON. THIEU STATED HE HAD PREPARED A MEMORANDUM WHICH HE THEN HANDED ME AND ADDED THAT HE WOULD BE WRITING A PERSONAL LETTER TO PRESIDENT NIXON WITHIN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO. (COPY OF MEMORANDUM SENT BY SEPARATE MESSAGE). HE CONCLUDED BY BEGGING EMOTIONALLY THAT PRESIDENT NIXON NOT BE INFLUENCED IN ANY WAY BY PRESIDENT THIEU'S FUTURE, BUT RATHER BY CONSIDERATIONS WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE FUTURE OF OVER 17 MILLION SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. HE SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO FACE THE WORST, BUT THAT HE COULD NOT COMPROMISE THE INTERESTS OF HIS PEOPLE.

I WANTED YOU TO HAVE THIS INITIAL REPORT WHICH ONLY PARTIALLY COVERS WHAT WAS A PROLONGED, HIGHLY CHARGED AND MOST SIGNIFICANT MEETING. I RECOGNIZE THAT THIS REPORT WILL RESULT IN GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT THERE. THE TASK AT HAND IS TO CONSIDER MOST CAREFULLY WHERE WE GO FROM HERE. UNDOUBTEDLY, WE CAN PROCEED UNILATERALLY WITH EITHER OF THE COUNTER PROPOSALS AND I BELIEVE THE JUSTIFICATION HAS BEEN MADE FOR US TO DO SO. HOWEVER, THE OUTCOME OF SUCH ACTION MUST BE MOST CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. IN MY VIEW IT WILL OR COULD WELL BRING ABOUT

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THE COLLAPSE OF THIEU'S GOVERNMENT. I DID NOT ANTICIPATE THE DEGREE OF SUSPICION GENERATED DURING THE MONTHS OF AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER. OUR ACTIONS ON 15 SEPTEMBER APPEARS TO HAVE CAUSED A COLLAPSE IN CONFIDENCE WHICH PREVENTED ANY RATIONALE ANALYSIS OF THE COUNTER PROPOSALS I CARRIED WITH ME. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT WE MUST NOW FIRST DECIDE HOW TO PROCEED AT THE NEXT PARIS SESSION AND MOVE ACCORDINGLY TO READJUST PROPERLY OUR OVERALL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THIEU. WE MUST MOVE DECISIVELY, TO EITHER WITHDRAW SUPPORT FROM HIM OR TO REBUILD BRIDGE BOTH THROUGH OUR ACTIONS IN PARIS AND A SUBSEQUENT COMMUNICATION FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THIEU. AT THIS POINT I TEND TO FAVOR THE LATTER COURSE. FINALLY, I WOULD CAUTION YOU THAT THE GVN MEMORANDUM SENT SEPARATELY DOES NOT IN ANY WAY CAPTURE THE REAL THRUST OF THIEU'S ARGUMENTS. THE MEMO IS OFFENSIVE AND LACED WITH DUC'S LANGUAGE. THIEU'S ARGUMENTS WERE RESPECTFULY AND LARGE AND DEVOID OF POLEMIC. HE IS UNQUESTIONABLY FRIGHTENED AND APPREHENSIVE ABOUT WHAT LIES AHEAD.

UPON PEREADING THE ABOVE, I WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT WHAT THIEU IS RECOMMENDING YOU DO IN YOUR NEXT SESSION IS TO ADHERE TO THE GVN PROPOSAL OUTLINED IN THEIR MEMORANDUM OF SEPTEMBER 13. THIEU INSISTS THE AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION THE GOVERNMENT BE COMPOSED OF THE VARIOUS POLITICAL FACTIONS IN PROPORTION TO THE POPULAR VOTE THEY RECEIVE AT THAT ELECTION. THIEU CHARACTERIZED THIS AS AN ELECTED COALITION GOVERNMENT. FURTHERMORE, I WANT YOU TO BE AWARE THAT AT THE OUTSET OF THE MEETING, I WITHDREW ALL THOSE VARIANTS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ALTERNATIVE WHICH INVOLVED ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT BY THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY. WHILE THIEU UNDERSTOOD THIS CHANGE COMPLETELY, IT MADE LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF WHAT IS AN INTRANSIGENT POSITION ON THE GVN. I ALSO MADE THE CASE ON THE SUBCOMMITTEES STATED IN YOUR TO HAIG 37 WHICH I RECEIVED JUST BEFORE THE MEETING.

PLANNED ARRIVAL TIME AT ANDREWS IS 8:30 PM LOCAL TIME ON 4 OCTOBER.